



United States Mission to the OSCE

Statement on Macedonia's Parliamentary Election

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
June 5, 2008

Mr. Chairman.

The United States has followed closely developments surrounding the June 1st parliamentary election in Macedonia. Despite significant shortcomings, there were some positive features of the election process. ODIHR reported that the elections were well administered procedurally and that the State Election Commission operated in a generally transparent and efficient manner.

Nevertheless, ODIHR's preliminary report notes that key OSCE commitments were not met. Violence, intimidation, and fraud deprived many Macedonian citizens of their fundamental democratic right.

The electoral campaign period saw an atmosphere of fear build in certain parts of the country as acts of intimidation occurred with disturbing frequency. There were other troubling irregularities during the campaign, including disproportionate and biased coverage of the governing coalition in the state media.

On election day, the violence continued, leading to one death and several injured. The violent incidents were accompanied by a large number of disturbing voting irregularities, including theft of ballot boxes, stuffing of ballot boxes, and intimidation of voters, poll workers and observers, especially in the northwest part of Macedonia and in areas just outside the city of Skopje. We also note with concern the temporary illegal detention of an ODIHR observer.

In line with Macedonia's OSCE commitments, we look to the authorities in Macedonia to vigorously investigate, prosecute, and appropriately sanction those responsible for election irregularities and violence. We welcome Prime Minister Gruevski's commitment to seek reruns of the election in those districts where voters were prevented from expressing their will. We urge the Government to work closely with ODIHR to ensure that the necessary steps are taken to remedy election shortcomings, to ensure peaceful reruns free of fear and intimidation, and to restore legitimacy to the voting in those areas that saw violence and other disturbances.

Mr. Chairman, the United States would like to take this opportunity to highlight once again the excellent and timely work of ODIHR in observing and reporting on this election. We also appreciate that authorities in Macedonia cooperated closely with ODIHR in the campaign and on election day.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.